

**HIT Standards Committee
Clinical Operations Workgroups – Task Force on Vocabulary**

Public Hearing- March 23, 2010

Comments: Brady E. Hamilton, Division of Vital Statistics, NCHS, CDC

1) What vocabulary subset or value set creation and distribution services do you provide?

The US Standard Certificates of Live Birth and Death and the Report of Fetal Death include items on Hispanic ethnicity and race, with the responses provided through the use of check-boxes and write-ins. Write-ins are used to maximize the complete collection of race information (in terms of detailed, specified groups). The number of specified ethnic and race groups which could be reported as literal responses is potentially very large. Coding standards were adopted and subsequently modified by NCHS to provide a common framework for the accurate and consistent categorization of the literal entries.

The standards, *HL7/CDC Unique Identifiers for the Specification of Race and Ethnicity*, combine the minimum categories for ethnicity and race stipulated in the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) standards on the collection and reporting of data on ethnicity and race (which were revised and adopted on October 30, 1997) and more detailed categories from the U.S. Bureau of Census.

2) Who uses your services and what is the level of use?

These standards and related codes were intended for the purpose of coding data for electronic transmission to NCHS by the 57 registration areas. However, as users of the data from the National Vital Statistics system increase, the community who use these codes becomes much broader.

3) What, if any, additional services and capabilities are in active development?

4) If applicable, what process is used to establish and revise any subsets or value sets that you distribute?

As mentioned, ethnicity and race coding standards are based, in part, on categories for ethnicity and race stipulated in the OMB standards. All federal agencies (which includes, NCHS) are required to follow these standards and only OMB can authorize changes to the standards for data collected by Federal agencies.

In accordance with the OMB directive's provision, federal agencies may collect and report data on more than just the minimum set of categories for data on

ethnicity and race, BUT only if these additional (“expanded: or detailed) categories map fully to the revised categories stipulated by OMB. For example, NCHS reports data on specified Hispanic (including Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban) and Asian (including Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese) groups, while not required to do so by the OMB standards.

Thus, the standards can be amended to include additional ethnicity and race groups. However, any substantive change in the ethnicity and race standards would require a revision of the standards at the federal level.

5) Based on your experience, what advice would you offer regarding best practices and pitfalls to avoid?

As mentioned by Charles Rothwell, the standards (including definitions and sources) and electronic systems which collect, edit and generate the data need to be thoroughly tested and certified before implementation. Moreover, it is important to communicate with all the groups and organizations which affect or can be affected by changes in standards or systems.